

set to catch game, and a needle for making nets. He also found some felled trees, wherefore he supposed there were inhabitants, and returned to his ship in alarm.

He was three months on the voyage, and on his return he saw two islands to starboard, but would not land, time being precious, as he was short of provisions. He says that the tides are slack and do not flow as they do here. The King of England is much pleased with this intelligence.

The King has promised that in the spring our countryman shall have ten ships, armed to his order, and at his request has conceded him all the prisoners, except such as are confined for high treason, to man his fleet. The King has also given him money wherewith to amuse himself till then, and he is now at Bristol with his wife, who is also Venetian, and with his sons. His name is Zuan Cabot, and he is styled the Great Admiral. Vast honor is paid him; he dresses in silk. And these English run after him like mad people, so that he can enlist as many of them as he pleases, and a number of our own rogues besides.

2. Richard Hakluyt Calls for an Empire (1582)

Richard Hakluyt, a remarkable clergyman-scholar-geographer who lies buried in Westminster Abbey, deserves high rank among the indirect founding fathers of the United States. His published collections of documents relating to early English explorations must be regarded as among the "great books" of American history for their stimulation of interest in New World colonization. (Hakluyt even gambled some of his own small fortune in the company that tried to colonize Virginia.) Passionately concerned about England's "sluggish security," he wrote the following in the dedicatory letter of his first published work (1582). It was addressed to Sir Philip Sidney—scholar, diplomat, author, poet, soldier, and knightly luminary of Queen Elizabeth's court. What were Hakluyt's various arguments for settling the Atlantic Coast north of Florida? Which ones probably appealed most strongly to Sidney's patriotism and religious faith?

I marvel not a little, right worshipful, that since the first discovery of America (which is now full four score and ten years), after so great conquests and plantings of the Spaniards and Portuguese there, that we of England could never have the grace to set fast footing in such fertile and temperate places as are left as yet undiscovered of them. But . . . I conceive great hope that the time approacheth and now is that we of England may share and part stakes [divide the prize] (if we will ourselves) both with the Spaniard and the Portuguese in part of America and other regions as yet undiscovered.

And surely if there were in us that desire to advance the honor of our country which ought to be in every good man, we would not all this while have forslown [neglected] the possessing of those lands which of equity and right appertain unto us, as by the discourses that follow shall appear most plainly.

Yea, if we would behold with the eye of pity how all our prisons are pestered

²Collected and published by Richard Hakluyt, *Divers Voyages Touching the Discovery of America and the Islands Adjacent*, . . . in the year 1582. Edited and with notes and an introduction by John Winter Jones (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1850), pp. 8–18.

and filled with able men to serve their country, which for small robberies are daily hanged up in great numbers, . . . we would hasten . . . the deducting [conveying] of some colonies of our superfluous people into those temperate and fertile parts of America, which, being within six weeks' sailing of England, are yet unpossessed by any Christians, and seem to offer themselves unto us, stretching nearer unto Her Majesty's dominions than to any other part of Europe. . . .

It chanced very lately that upon occasion I had great conference in matters of cosmography with an excellent learned man of Portugal, most privy to all the discoveries of his nation, who wondered that those blessed countries from the point of Florida northward were all this while unplanted by Christians, protesting with great affection and zeal that if he were now as young as I (for at this present he is three score years of age) he would sell all he had, being a man of no small wealth and honor, to furnish a convenient number of ships to sea for the inhabiting of those countries and reducing those gentile [heathen] people to Christianity. . . .

If this man's desire might be executed, we might not only for the present time take possession of that good land, but also, in short space, by God's grace find out that short and easy passage by the Northwest which we have hitherto so long desired. . . .

Certes [certainly], if hitherto in our own discoveries we had not been led with a preposterous desire of seeking rather gain than God's glory, I assure myself that our labors had taken far better effect. But we forgot that godliness is great riches, and that if we first seek the kingdom of God, all other things will be given unto us. . . .

I trust that now, being taught by their manifold losses, our men will take a more godly course and use some part of their goods to his [God's] glory. If not, he will turn even their covetousness to serve him, as he hath done the pride and avarice of the Spaniards and Portuguese, who, pretending in glorious words that they made their discoveries chiefly to convert infidels to our most holy faith (as they say), in deed and truth sought not them, but their goods and riches. . . .

Here I cease, craving pardon for my overboldness, trusting also that Your Worship will continue and increase your accustomed favor toward these godly and honorable discoveries.

3. An English Landlord Describes a Troubled England (1623)

England's prosperity in the early sixteenth century had been built on the backs of bleating sheep, as exports of raw wool and finished woolen cloth boomed. Beginning about 1550, however, a severe depression descended on the woolen districts. Thousands of sheepherders and weavers were pitched out of work and onto the roads of England. England suddenly seemed to be overflowing with paupers and vagabonds, as described in the following letter by a Lincolnshire landlord. What did he find most alarming?

Right honourable brother, the best news I can send you is that we are all in good health God be praised. I am now here with my son to settle some country af-

³*Lincolnshire Notes and Queries* (Horncastle, England: W. K. Morton, 1888), vol. I, no. 1, pp. 15–16 (a quarterly journal devoted to the antiquities, parochial records, family history, folklore, quaint customs, etc., of the county).

fair, and my own private, which were never so burdensome unto me as now. For many insufficient tenants have given up their farms and sheepwalks, so as I am forced to take them into my own hands and borrow money upon use to stock them. It draweth me wholly from a contemplative life, which I most affected, and could be most willing to pass over my whole estate to the benefit of my children so as I were freed of the trouble. Our country was never in that want that now it is, and more of money than corn, for there are many thousands in these parts who have sold all they have even to their bed straw and cannot get work to earn any money. Dog's flesh is a dainty dish and found upon search in many houses, also such horse flesh as hath lain long in a deke for hounds. And the other day one stole a sheep who for mere hunger tore a leg out, and did eat it raw. All that is most certain true and yet the great time of scarcity not yet come. I shall rejoice to have a better subject to write of, and expect it with patience. In the mean time and ever

I will remain

Your honour's most loving brother to serve you

William Pelham

4. Hakluyt Sees England's Salvation in America (1584)

In one of his most widely read works, Discourse Concerning the Western Planting, published in 1584, Richard Hakluyt further developed the argument that colonizing America might provide a remedy for England's festering economic and social problems. What did he identify as the most pressing problems to be solved? In what ways did he see America providing solutions to those problems? How prophetic was he about the role the American colonies were to play in England's commerce?

It is well worth the observation to see and consider what the like voyages of discovery and planting in the East and West Indies have wrought in the kingdoms of Portugal and Spain; both which realms, being of themselves poor and barren and hardly able to sustain their inhabitants, by their discoveries have found such occasion of employment, that these many years we have not heard scarcely of any pirate of those two nations; whereas we and the French are most infamous for our outrageous, common, and daily piracies. . . . [W]e, for all the statutes that hitherto can be devised, and the sharp execution of the same in punishing idle and lazy persons, for want of sufficient occasion of honest employment, cannot deliver our commonwealth from multitudes of loiterers and idle vagabonds.

Truth it is that through our long peace and seldom sickness . . . we are grown more populous than ever heretofore; so that now there are of every art and science so many, that they can hardly live by one another, nay, rather, they are ready to eat up one another; yes, many thousands of idle persons are within this realm, which, having no way to be set on work, be either mutinous and seek alteration in the state, or at least very burdensome to the commonwealth, and often fall to pilfering and thieving and other lewdness, whereby all the prisons of the land are daily

⁴Richard Hakluyt, *Discourse Concerning the Western Planting* (1584), in Charles Deane, ed., *Documentary History of the State of Maine* (Cambridge: Press of John Wilson and Son, 1877), vol. 2, pp. 36-39.

pestered and stuffed full of them, where either they pitifully pine away, or else at length are miserably hanged. . . .

Whereas if this voyage were put in execution, these petty thieves might be condemned for certain years to the western parts, especially in Newfoundland, in sawing and felling of timber for masts of ships; . . . in burning of the firs and pine trees to make pitch, tar, rosin, and soap ashes; in beating and working of hemp for cordage; and, in the more southern parts, in setting them to work in mines of gold, silver, copper, lead, and iron; in dragging for pearls and coral; in planting of sugar cane, as the Portuguese have done in Madera; in maintenance and increasing of silk worms for silk, and in dressing the same; in gathering of cotton whereof there is plenty; in tilling of the soil for grain; in dressing of vines whereof there is great abundance for wine; olives, whereof the soil is capable, for oil; trees for oranges, lemons, almonds, figs, and other fruits, all which are found to grow there already; . . . in fishing, salting, and drying of ling, cod, salmon, herring; in making and gathering of honey, wax, turpentine. . . .

Besides this, such as by any kind of infirmity cannot pass the seas thither, and now are chargeable to the realm at home, by this voyage shall be made profitable members, by employing them in England in making of a thousand trifling things, which will be very good merchandise for those countries where we shall have most ample vent^e [sales] thereof.

And seeing the savages . . . are greatly delighted with any cap or garment made of coarse woolen cloth, their country being cold and sharp in winter, it is manifest we shall find great [demand for] our clothes . . . whereby all occupations belonging to clothing and knitting shall freshly be set on work, as cappers, knitters, clothiers, woolmen, carders, spinners, weavers, fullers, shearmen, dyers, drapers, hatters, and such like, whereby many decayed towns may be repaired.

Thought Provokers

1. How might we explain the attitudes of Renaissance-era Europeans toward the newly discovered Indians? Was the concern for Christianizing the Native Americans sincere?
2. What motivated the Spanish to colonize the Americas in the sixteenth century? On balance, was the Spanish arrival good or bad for the New World? What advantages and disadvantages did the Spanish have as colonizers?
3. Why did Europeans look to Africa for labor with which to develop the riches of the New World? To what extent did Africans themselves help to promote the slave trade?
4. What were the most valid arguments used to promote English colonization in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries? What relevance to the English did the example of Spain's colonizing venture in the New World have?